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EDUCATIONAL PROBLEMS IN INDIA

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An Address Delivered at Clark University during the Conference upon the
Far East.

The poet who best sings the glories of the English has outlined their over-seas policy in this way:

“They terribly carpet the earth with dead,
And before their cannon cool,
They walk unarmed by twos and threes
To call their living to school.”

The illustrations in Kipling's mind were the terrible slaughter of Omdurman in the reconquest of the Soudan, and the founding of Gordon College at Khartoum, “before their cannon cooled,” by General Kitchener, the Commander of the British Army of Occupation. In India, too, the conquest of the country has been rapidly followed by the establishment of schools.

The steps leading to the present system of education in India have been five:

1. Lord Macaulay's Minute of 1835, leading to a determination of the issue in favor of European learning and the English language, as against Oriental learning and the classical languages of India.
2. The Court of Director's Despatch of 1854, being the great charter of education in India and outlining the present organization.
3. The Universities Acts of Incorporation of 1857, establishing the great Indian Universities of Calcutta, Madras and Bombay to be followed later by those of Allahabad and Lahore.
4. The Education Commission of 1882, reviewing the past and confirming that which had been found most useful in experience.

5. The Reforms instituted by Lord Curzon in 1902, leading to the appointment of the Indian Universities Commission of 1902 and the Indian Universities Act of 1904 and the very great enlargement of primary education.

It was not until 1854, when the results of previous discussions and experiments were summed up in the great educational despatch of the Directors of the East India Company, that the true path of development was marked out. Since then steady progress has been maintained. Even the storm of the Mutiny, which followed soon after, and which for a time overthrew all order, was powerless to stem the rising tide of educational development along the line of a high ideal, that of "conferring upon the natives of India those vast moral and material blessings which flow from the general diffusion of useful knowledge and which India may, under Providence, derive from her connection with England."

Nothing is more honorable to the British supremacy in India, or more becoming to the cause of education than the fact that while the storm of fanaticism and ignorance and cruelty was at its height the administrators of the country set themselves, with calmness and deliberation, to pursue the policy of establishing universities and an educational system, thus creating that knowledge which alone can exorcise the spirit of fanaticism from which India was suffering.

This experience so honorable to England is being repeated at the present time, when the present Viceroy of India and the Secretary of State for India are calmly and resolutely persisting in their introduction of reforms educational and otherwise undeterred by the sedition and the crime of political agitators. There has not been a finer illustration in recent times of the spirit of justice dominant in the presence of unrest and disturbance than that which was afforded by the great Indian debate in Parliament in July, 1908, when John Morley, the Secretary of State for India—secure in the possession of a sane and resolute spirit, of the confidence and approval of his countrymen and of a deep understanding of the history and democracy of England, confronting the two great and masterful pro-consuls of Egypt and India, Lord Cromer and Lord Curzon, in their criticism of his administra-

tion and their demand for a postponement of the reforms proposed, in view of the sedition rife in that country — declared resolutely to Parliament, to all Britain, and to all India that no fanatical crimes would deter him from endeavoring to meet as well as he could the political aspirations of the honest reformers of their great dependency in Asia, and that one of the first articles in his programme of reform would be that of education. Again, as Kipling writes, “before the cannon cool they call the living to school.”

The story of the development of the modern British system of education in India, by its superimposition upon the ancient, indigenous system, so long-lived and so widespread in that land, gives rise to many interesting questions. And while high praise is due the Englishmen for the splendid courage and firm spirit shown in carrying forward their stupendous task of putting new wine into old bottles without doing too great violence to either, from the standpoint of those who are studying from without this experiment whereby the newest European methods are being applied to the reorganization of a long stationary Asiatic society, and who are looking for lessons that may be useful in the development of their own expanding national life, there remain large problems of vital significance to be solved.

Language. There is, for example, the old but very vital problem of the linguistic medium through which knowledge is to be communicated, a problem which always arises in connection with the introduction of Western learning into Eastern lands. This old controversy raged in India between the Orientalists and Anglicists until the issue was brought to a settlement by the famous Minute of Lord Macaulay, who was the legislative member on the Council of the Governor-General in the third decade of the last century. With his characteristic brilliance he argued against the Sanskrit and the Arabic languages and for the English as the medium of instruction: “I have never found,” he wrote, “anyone among them (the Orientalists) who could deny that a single shelf of a good European library was worth the whole native literature of India and Arabia. * * * Whoever knows that language (English) has ready access to all the vast

intellectual wealth which all the wisest nations of the earth have created and hoarded in the course of ninety generations. It may be safely said that the literature now extant in that language is of far greater value than all the literature which three hundred years ago was extant in all the languages of the world together."

In more recent years this discussion seems to be renewed, and the wisdom of attaching so much importance to the study of English, and so little to oriental classical and vernacular literature, has been called in question. It has been felt by some that Macaulay's influence made the pendulum swing too far in the direction of the English language, and that it would have been better if the study of Sanskrit and Arabic literature had been allowed to go hand in hand with the study of the literature of the West. In this way the breach between the past and the present might have been less perceptible and a new knowledge might have had less unsettling effects. But however unnecessary it may now appear to be to bestow greater attention in the future on the classical languages of India, there is now no forsaking of the past possible, so far as western learning is concerned. In high schools and colleges English has long been not only the subject but also the medium of instruction. Many of the most important newspapers which are circulated only for Indian readers are printed by preference in English, and of the total number of books published in each year about one in ten is written in English. The language of national assemblies in the country is now English, as the one common to the greatest number. Where is this growth in the use of English to stop? Will it continue until it has supplanted not only the classical languages but also the one hundred and fifty, more or less, troublesome vernaculars? Indeed a well known English scholar in India some years ago advocated the extinction of the native languages. He argued from the analogy between the Roman empire and the British dominion in India. The Romans encouraged the study of Latin in Gaul, Spain and Africa. They did not promote the Gallic, Iberian, or Moorish literature in their conquered provinces. Why then, he asks, should the English encourage the native languages of India?

It is only necessary to point out, in reply, that the analogy of the two cases fails in the fact that the Gauls and Spaniards and Moors were not literary nations. Nor did they possess a copious literature. Nor had they for 2500 years used a scientific theory of grammar and a clear analysis of the forms and structure of their languages. Had this advocate for the extermination of the native languages of India endeavored to carry this analogy a little further and to apply it to the one subject people of Rome most nearly akin to the Hindus in intellectual subtlety, the Greeks, he would have seen its utter failure. The Greeks never gave up for Latin the language which embodied all that remained to solace them in their degradation, the memory of the ancient glories of their race, and the creations of their genius. What was true of the past is also true of more modern Grecian history. Only about a century ago Greece was liberated from a Turkish tyranny centuries old, during which time her language had lost much of its strength and beauty. Modern Greeks do not speak the language of Pericles. Still they did not yield it, shorn of its glory though it was, to the language of their Moslem conquerors.

Ancient classic Greek may be likened to the classical languages of the Hindus, and the modern language of Athens to the ruling vernaculars of India, which, though not Sanskrit, are, some of them, derived from it.

There are many circumstances which augment the improbability of the English ever entirely supplanting the classics as the literary language of India or of its becoming the everyday speech of the millions of that country. The national objects, the implements, the social order are too different to admit of easy transition from one language to another. On every ground, therefore, it seems scarcely possible that the English should ever be anything more in India than was Greek in ancient Rome.

Education and Development of Character. There is still another and a far more serious problem connected with the government education of the Indian people which we must recognize, and yet the discussion of which we enter upon with hesitancy because it is so wide in its application and so far

reaching in its significance. It is the question of the responsibility of the educational system in India for the failure to develop among its people those ethical and moral qualities which are the bases and the safeguards of a truly national life; in other words its failure to develop character which is universally recognized to be the aim of every well grounded educational system, and the failure to attain which is its condemnation. The discussion of this problem then leads to the inquiry: How far is the modern system of education in India responsible for the present great unrest amongst the people of that country?

That we may not be accused of creating an issue where one does not exist, let us here note the conclusions of Lord Curzon and Lord Cromer, two of the most successful and most capable statesmen experienced in the conduct of practical administration among oriental peoples.

During the debate in the House of Lords already referred to, Lord Curzon, recently returned from his very eventful septennate in India as Viceroy, declared:

It will be admitted by everyone that first and foremost among the causes of the unrest (in India) is the education which we have given to the people. For years—indeed ever since the day of Macaulay—we have been giving to the people an education which, however admirably suited to a country which has constitutional development, is profoundly ill adapted to a country where the traditions, social customs, and the state of intellectual evolution are what we see. It has taught the people of India the catch-words of western civilization without inspiring them with its ideas or spirit or inculcating its sobriety. It has sharpened their intellect without forming their character.

Lord Cromer, with Indian as well as Egyptian administrative experience, added:

I am in entire concurrence with Lord Curzon that by far the most important cause of all in producing this unrest is the system of education. We are really only reaping the harvest which we have ourselves sown. * * * Lord Stowell once said that if you supply educated talent which will exceed the demand, the surplus was likely to turn sour. That is what has happened in India.

And Viscount Morley, the Secretary of State for India, manifestly feeling the responsibility of his position, and with the knowledge and discrimination of a scholar as well as of

a statesman, closed the great debate with this cautious but conclusive judgment:

I think I am able to accept and follow him (Lord Curzon) into those causes. I think his diagnosis is thoroughly sound.

This inadequacy in the present system of education is recognized also by others who are not officially connected with the administration of the country. A keenly intelligent and observing Englishman, who has lived many years in India and moved freely among the educated classes, has recently sent out this solemn warning:

Our Indian education is creating an immense class for whom it has largely loosened the authority and obligation of the past, and who, with quickened intellectual capacities, crave for a career which we cannot afford to open, for lack of that moral fibre with which we have failed to supply them, in the place of what they have lost. Such a situation is charged with peril; and it cannot possibly stop there. We must go on to furnish those moral and spiritual forces which alone can supplement and justify the education. Our statesmen have reached the limit of their powers, and a stupendous task confronts us.

Englishmen of all shades of opinion have then come to the conclusion that one, if not the great, cause of the unrest in India is the imperfect and ill adapted system of education and that reform is to be urged on three lines, viz., moral, technical and primary education.

Religious and Moral Training. This leads us to a discussion of the place of moral and religious instruction in a state system of education, a question which has always been one of deep concern and of differing solutions. It has led also to the adoption of widely differing administrative policies.

In ancient Greece and Rome religion became a function of the state and closely allied to their educational systems. In the Middle Ages the church and state coalesced and formed so intimate a union that the domain of each was entered by the other. The school, which was the creation of the church, has, in most countries, passed into the control of the civil government, and there has been a consequent declension in the emphasis placed upon the religious element in education.

The attitude of the present day towards religious instruction is very varied. In Germany and France we see the work-

ing of two diametrically opposed policies. In the former religious instruction is as definitely prescribed by law as in the latter it is proscribed. In Great Britain and the United States we see again wide differences of policy. For in England, education has always been largely carried on under religious auspices, and, in recent years, the controversy over the participation of the church in education has been a dominant political issue. In the United States, on the contrary, there is a complete separation of the church and state, and the practical exclusion of definite religious instruction.

In India religion has, for twenty-five centuries, sanctified the pursuit of knowledge, as the path of liberation from the world, and absorption in God. When the English undertook the education of the people of India, the unwisdom of government interference with the religion of the Hindus was generally conceded, and they bound themselves to the maintenance of religious neutrality. This principle, asserted by all the great Governors of India, solemnly proclaimed by the great Despatch of 1854, and reiterated in the Recommendations of the Education Commission of 1882, was regarded by the Hindus as the great safeguard of their liberties. But the principle cut both ways. Stripped of all secondary aims, government education was confined to the primary object of conveying knowledge.

If education is training for completeness of life, one of its primary elements is religion. If an educational system be established on a basis which excludes this religious element, and if that religious element be not supplied through other agencies, the result will inevitably be a deterioration of the highest national type, and the loss of the finer qualities which are the safeguards of purity and of unselfish conduct. Education can never grow weary of the assertion of the truth that nothing has so much value as the will guided by the right, or by a sense of duty. The education which trains the mind is eminently desirable, but that which forms the character, which is the actualizing of duty, is absolutely indispensable.

And right here, what we believe to be an entirely sound

educational theory has its application to the system adopted in India. The elevation of the Hindu character is admitted by all intelligent Hindus, no less than by Englishmen, to be a prime necessity. The failure of the present educational system in India to do this, to instill in her people a commanding sense of duty, to lead them to the practical adoption of the virtues of morality, in a word, to give them such moral strength as is possessed by the nations of Europe and America after long centuries of religious instruction, this failure gives countenance to the famous classification by *The London Spectator* of the culture of the Bengali Babu, along with that of the Roman nobles in the period of the empire, and of the Chinese Literati of the present as constituting the "Three Rotten Cultures" of history.

Along with the dissolutions of many ancient customs which English rule and western learning have brought about, the customary morality has received a grievous shock. To learn that the world was not made exclusively for the Brahmans, that the earth was not made of concentric rings with India as the centre, that it does not rest on the back of a tortoise, could not but have the result of shaking belief in many other vain theories of the world and of life. Elementary education has taught him that whatever may be the power of the Brahman, he cannot make water boil at any other temperature than that at which it naturally boils, and that a million repetitions of the names of their gods will not keep epidemics away from unsanitary houses. This decay of old influences has led, among the classes affected by contact with the English, to a certain weakening of the moral sense, such as it was. The result is that intellectual progress has outstripped moral progress in India, and that the bonds of ancient tradition and of religious sanction have been abruptly snapped. Generations of young men are growing up in that country who have no deep religious convictions, no fixed moral principles, no well defined rules of conduct, no "landmark on earth, and no lodestar in heaven." The ancient Hindu ideals exist no longer, if they ever did, as a moral dynamic in ordinary life. It is philosophy, but it is not food.

Not only those in high places of authority in India, but

the responsible leaders of native life and thought as well, are recognizing the need of moral and religion along with secular instruction.

In March of last year the Maharajah of Darbhanga, accompanied by a deputation of the Hindu Religious Society, presented to the Viceroy on behalf of that body, an address, the signatures to which were representative of leading native states and of three great religious shrines in India. The address stated that the society was a primarily religious and non-political one, and that their main object was to secure the imparting of religious with secular education. The Earl of Minto, in his reply, sincerely welcomed the distinguished deputation and expressed complete sympathy with the aims of the Society.

The best answer, however, to this great need has been found in the so-called missionary educational system, so largely participated in by Americans, and so long and so widely established throughout India. This need has been met, in part, by the large number of schools and colleges maintained by Christian religious societies, which form so important a part of the educational system of India, and wherein religious instruction is an essential feature of the daily curriculum. That this demand for moral training exists, and that this opportunity for it is appreciated, is best attested by the fact that these missionary institutions are so largely attended by non-Christian Hindus, notwithstanding and possibly, in part, because of the definite daily instruction in religion, with the Bible as text book; and this when ample opportunity is afforded for attending schools under government and Hindu auspices where no religious instruction is given.

There are many other questions of great importance to the developing educational life in India, and which are discussed with deep interest in that country. We can only mention them here.

Reforms in university education, with special reference to the undue importance attached to the matter of examinations, have been very warmly and generally agitated. This has led to the appointment of an Indian Universities Com-

mission, and to an elaborate report which includes a full treatment of this particular subject.

The development of technical and industrial education is pressed by many in authority, who see in it a means to the utilization of the large mineral and agricultural resources of the country, and to a removal of much of the poverty which so cripples the people. Missionary societies, especially those under American auspices, have already taken a distinct lead in this development.

The wider diffusion of knowledge, and the spreading of the beneficent results that flow from it, among the masses of the great middle and lower classes, who compose so large a part of the population, is an extension of the educational system especially urged in the past by Americans at work in South India. This has come to be recognized as a most important reform to be accomplished.

Female education is being agitated among Hindus as a result in large part of its having been advocated both by missionaries and the department of education, in order to enlarge the social and intellectual life, now so limited by the restrictions placed upon the women of the country.

Thus it is that the whole history of British education in India is not without deep interest and real significance. The reaction of the West on the East and the revival of peoples everywhere, visible in India, in Japan and in China, is a phenomenon as remarkable as any in modern history. In India, where a social system has been based for two thousand years on a deep philosophy, the study of this revival cannot be without attraction for those who are observing the tendencies of the time. The primitive society has suddenly awakened to find itself face to face with an enemy it is powerless to resist. The modern world, where it does not absorb, destroys. In the East, western education is an agent at once destructive and constructive. Which it shall be depends largely upon the people of England, with the coöperation of those in America, in the maintenance and promulgation of the highest ideals of the Christian civilization.

Whatever may be the future of the English connection with India, it is, at any rate, certain, to use the words of the

great religious reformer, Wilberforce, that "by planting her language, her knowledge, and her opinions in her Asiatic territories, she has put a great work beyond the reach of contingencies."

The ideas which have been introduced into India, ethical and moral as well as political, cannot be ineffective among a people so interested in intellectual and religious questions as are the Hindus. They cannot but germinate, and finally change the whole face of Indian society. The present is strong and practical. The future must share many of its characteristics.